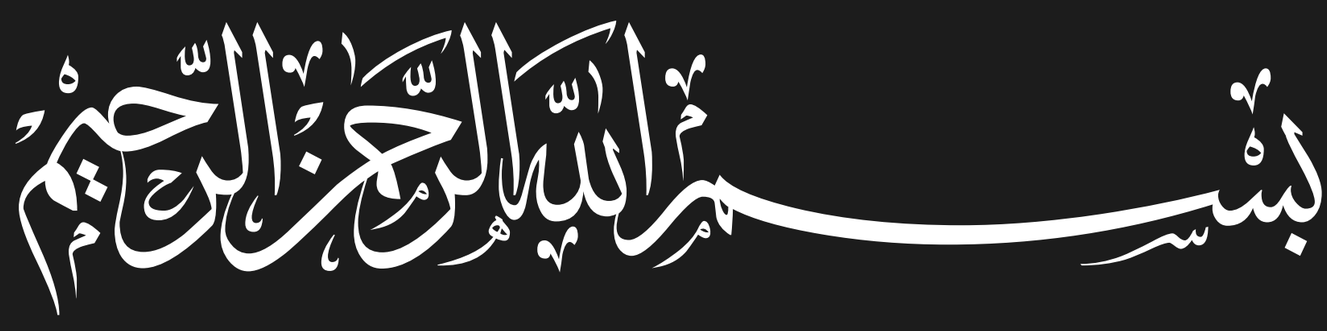
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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

AMAUACADEMY

Assalamu’alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu,

We pray that this message reaches you
in good health and imaan.

On behalf of our AMAU Academy team, we would like to present to you these compiled notes that we have prepared to make your journey with us a lot easier.

Our notes are compiled by the AMAU Admin team and have not been comprehensively checked by a teacher.

If you find any errors or corrections that need to be made, kindly inform us via our email **helpdesk@amauacademy.com**

May Allah make our paths toward seeking beneficial knowledge easy and kindle our hearts with sincerity and gratefulness towards Him.

Jazakumullahu Khayran

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جل جلاله | Jalla Jalāluhu

Allah the Most Exalted



صلى الله عليه وسلم | Sallāllāhu Alayhi Wa Sallam

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him

This course deals with topics such as being organised, productive, managing one’s time, and so on.

It is based on a productivity book titled *Getting Things Done* by David Allen. A reason why this book is worth reading is that it does not advocate philosophical ideas or religious beliefs that oppose the teachings of Islam. It is practical and generic in terms of its content. The frameworks provided in it are simple and can be customised to suit a person’s lifestyle.

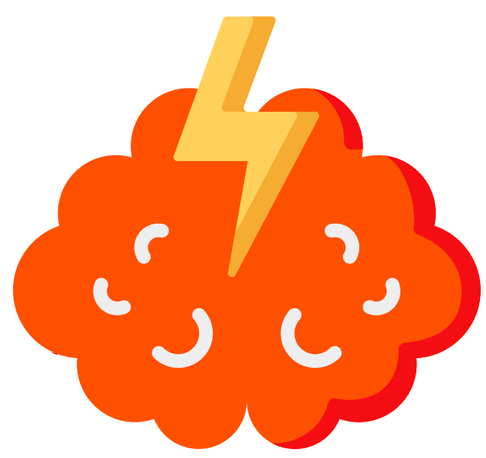
The course starts by breaking down selected quotes from the book. These quotes help readers develop a proper mindset for understanding concepts related to information and organisation.

Anxiety is Caused by a Lack of Control, Organisation, Preparation and Action

Chapter One

The best way to relieve stress and anxiety is to turn to Allah, make du'aa to Him and remember Him through Dhikr.

THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF STRESS IS A LACK OF CONTROL OVER YOUR SITUATION AND TASKS.



It's not about the length of your to-do list or the number of projects; the issue lies in the absence of a structured plan. Being unprepared leaves you unable to decide the next steps, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed.

This makes you end up feeling lazy and defeated.

The essence of the problem can therefore be traced back to the topic of being organised. Now, we need to tackle this problem from two different areas:

1 Islam

There is the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ wherein he says:

1 احْرِصْ عَلَى مَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَلاَ تَعْجِزْ

Strive for that which will benefit you, seek the help of Allah, and do not feel helpless.

Sunan Ibn Majah 79

Through this hadith, we learn that we need Allah's help, an abundance of dhikr and that we need to look for sources of barakah in our lives.

2 Small Action Steps

To regain control, take a step forward by becoming more organised. Break down the entire workload into small, manageable steps. Instead of dwelling on the bigger picture, focus on the smallest task that can be easily completed.

For instance, if you need to record a 3-hour video, the thought of starting from scratch might be overwhelming. Instead of stressing about the entire process, just tidy up your studio, ensure it's ready, sit down, and press record. Keep it simple.

This approach is especially helpful for those dealing with procrastination, as breaking tasks into small steps prevents feeling paralyzed. In conclusion, alleviating work stress involves breaking it down into achievable steps and taking the first simple actions. Once you have a plan and know your next steps, the stress about tasks significantly diminishes.

Stress Due to Commitments

Chapter Two

This chapter begins with the second quote:

“AN AMBIENT ANGST PERVADES OUR SOCIETY—THERE’S A SENSE THAT SOMEHOW THERE’S PROBABLY SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE DOING THAT WE’RE NOT, WHICH CREATES A TENSION FOR WHICH THERE IS NO RESOLUTION AND FROM WHICH THERE IS NO REST.”

One common stress when getting organised is the fear of forgetting something important, like tasks or deadlines.

For example, imagine agreeing to meet someone at the Masjid a week later, but you forget about it. When you see them waiting, you realise you missed the appointment due to busyness.

If these situations happen a lot, the constant worry about forgetting important things creates ongoing stress.

Simplifying organisation involves addressing this concern. However, it doesn't include situations where you deliberately choose to let go of a task or appointment for higher priorities, as that decision doesn't add to background stress.

1

“MOST OF THE STRESS PEOPLE EXPERIENCE COMES FROM INAPPROPRIATELY MANAGED COMMITMENTS THEY MAKE OR ACCEPT.”

Making commitments that are beyond your capacity, especially for those who struggle to say 'No,' leads to stress and potential wrongdoing. When you accept tasks you can't manage, it can conflict with other promises, causing harm.

Responding to requests requires more than a simple yes or no; explaining your decision is crucial. Commitments involve both external promises to others and internal promises to yourself.

Understanding commitments means being open to renegotiating when necessary, both with others and yourself. Realism is key—adjust plans and deadlines based on priorities to make commitments achievable.

2

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"WE NEED TO TRANSFORM ALL THE "STUFF" WE'VE ATTRACTED AND ACCUMULATED INTO A CLEAR INVENTORY OF MEANINGFUL ACTIONS, PROJECTS, AND USABLE INFORMATION."

Handling a multitude of inputs, whether from calls, messages, emails, or various sources, can lead to background stress. Imagine your digital storage, filled with files, videos, and more. Some are useful, while others are just clutter.

This digital clutter can cause anxiety—fear of not finding what you need or accidentally deleting something important.

To ease the stress, categorise your content into three:

1. **Usable Information**
2. **Projects**
3. **Actions**

This way, you organise and prioritise, making it easier to access what's important when you need it.

A Usable Information

You need something like a filing cabinet. It could be one of those metal drawers/cabinets one used to see in offices back in the day. Or it could simply be a bookshelf or even an online cloud storage Google Drive.

Here, you will put everything you deem usable. It does not necessarily have to be something you need to refer to multiple times a day. But suppose you got yourself a book to read. You are too busy to read it now, so you plan to benefit from it in the future.

Thus, your book will go into this category. You put it under "Usable Information" so that you know where to find it and that you can retrieve it quickly and easily whenever you want.

This category should be nicely organised in alphabetical or chronological order.

Bear in mind that this category should NOT contain unneeded data or information. This place is meant only for things that are purely and evidently usable.

B Projects

In his book, the author defines a project as any task that takes more than one step or action to finish.

Therefore, you can have projects that may take 10 minutes to complete, and others that go on for years.

This idea of a project can be beneficial for those struggling with procrastination. It helps them stop bundling tasks together and allows them to approach work with small baby steps.

C Actions

The author describes an action as a single step you take to do something. Anything that takes more than one step or action becomes a project.

Therefore, projects are collections of actions. Every action you do brings you nearer to the end of a project.

Thought Is Useful When It Motivates Action and a Hindrance When It Substitutes for Action

Chapter Three

"THOUGHT IS USEFUL WHEN IT MOTIVATES ACTION AND A HINDRANCE WHEN IT SUBSTITUTES FOR ACTION."

When thinking about something helps you be more productive, it is good. But when this act of thinking replaces action, it is bad.

A person decides to become organised. He takes out his notebook and spends the day listing down all of his to-dos for the following days. In essence, he just wasted his day trying to write down the tasks he planned to finish. He was just pretending to work but did not work at all.

5

"THE KEY TO MANAGING ALL OF YOUR STUFF IS MANAGING YOUR ACTIONS."

At the end of the day, everything boils down to the next action you are going to take. For example, **"What is the next thing you are going to do after having read these notes?"**

To manage your actions well, try to follow up every action you do with the most beneficial, or the second most beneficial action you can think of.

6

"THERE IS USUALLY AN INVERSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOW MUCH SOMETHING IS ON YOUR MIND AND HOW MUCH IT'S GETTING DONE."

If something is on your mind all the time, it means you are not doing it. If you were working on it, it wouldn't be bothering you.

Suppose you have to share an important document with your manager. While tending to other tasks during the day, you keep reminding yourself, "I must not forget to submit the document. I must not forget to submit the document..."

The only reason you keep thinking about it is that you haven't done it yet.
Once you do it, you stop stressing about it.

7

"YOU NEED NO NEW SKILLS TO INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCE YOUR STRESS. JUST AN ENHANCED SET OF SYSTEMATIC BEHAVIOURS WITH WHICH TO APPLY THEM."

What this means is that you don't have to become a different person. You just require a consistent set of habits that you can stick to. Using them, you should manage and organise your projects and try to maximise your productivity to get the best out of who you are.

Following this approach, you will do fine, with the permission of Allah.

8

"ONE OF THE BEST TRICKS FOR ENHANCING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY IS HAVING ORGANISING TOOLS YOU LOVE TO USE."

If you are unable to enjoy the process of organising yourself, then you are probably using the wrong tool.

For instance, suppose you discover a productivity app that has 5-star reviews from thousands of people. It has multiple features, a calendar, a notes section, reminders, etc. But you feel it does not work for you.

Instead, you find that you are better off with pen and paper, and stationary tools like colourful sticky notes, and the like.

Therefore, if you apply something and try to make it a part of your work process, but it fails to fit in, you are most likely applying the wrong tool.

9

"THINGS YOU NAME, YOU OWN. COLLECTED BUT UNKNOWN STUFF OWNS YOU."

The idea behind this quote is that naming things, such as projects, is important. Unnamed tasks or items, including junk, can remain vague, unclassifiable and unorganised if we do not specify them.

Even if it's just a load of unpaid bills you see lying around, you can stop stressing about them by just gathering and labelling them as "BILLS TO BE PAID." This is enough to give you a sense of ownership and control over things.

10

"MANAGE THE COMMITMENTS OF OTHERS BEFORE THEIR AVOIDANCE CREATES A CRISIS."

Managing commitments is more meaningful than blindly fulfilling them. It's okay to communicate with friends or anyone seeking your help, informing them if you need more time. This is better than breaking a promise.

Staying on top of tasks and keeping others informed about delays or progress is crucial. Collaboration becomes smoother when reminders and updates are part of the commitment management process.

Avoid making promises just to please others, as it can lead to crises. Communication and proactive management are key to maintaining meaningful commitments.

11

“THE INHERENT DANGER IN THE DIGITAL WORLD IS HOW MUCH DATA CAN BE SPREAD IN SO MANY DIFFERENT PLACES SO EASILY, WITHOUT ANY COORDINATING LINKS.”

Managing data becomes challenging when it's scattered everywhere.

To make handling information easier, put everything together in one simple system. This includes messages from WhatsApp, Telegram, emails, and family or work-related stuff. Get rid of things you don't need. Use a system that is easy and quick to manage, so you can organise everything in one place.

12

“THERE ARE NO INTERRUPTIONS. THERE ARE ONLY MISMANAGED INPUTS.”

"Interruptions" can be from others or ourselves, and the issue is we often don't know how to handle them.

For example, someone might knock on your door and ask for help when you're busy with an important project. Without a strategy, you may keep getting interrupted and struggle to focus on your work.

The solution is simple: learn to pause and plan when unexpected things happen. Evaluate priorities and decide what to address first. You can either temporarily stop your project to help the person or ask for some time and return to them once your project is done.

13

“TRYING TO MANAGE FROM THE TOP DOWN WHEN THE BOTTOM IS OUT OF CONTROL MAY BE THE LEAST EFFECTIVE APPROACH.”

A lot of people assume that once they fix their vision and have their long-term goals set, everything else will automatically fall into place.

But if you are not in control of your day-to-day tasks, the vision and objectives you place at the top are not likely to be achieved. The right approach is to work your way up.

14

"PICK BATTLES BIG ENOUGH TO MATTER AND SMALL ENOUGH TO WIN."

When it comes to prioritising tasks, there are usually 2 options:

1 **Big Wins** ***Things that are significant but not easy to accomplish.***

2 **Easy Wins** ***Things that are super easy to do but they do not help you a lot.***

The most effective approach here is to find a middle path between big tasks and easy tasks. This ensures that you achieve something significant without becoming overwhelmed by the level of difficulty you endure while trying to achieve it.

15

Capturing Your Inputs

Chapter Four

After going over some of the quotes that help us get into the right mindset needed to become organised, we proceed to discuss the practical steps we should take to draw nearer to our goal.

The first stage we must focus on is **“Collecting the Inputs”**. All the data that comes your way from all directions needs to be transferred from your mind and fed into a trusted system. Simply put, you need a collecting tool.

Every single piece of useful information - from WhatsApp, Telegram, and emails to to-do lists, voice mails, and bits of paper lying around - that is unorganised should first be collected.

Then, it should be categorised into:

1. **Usable information (such as recipes, books, shopping lists, etc.)**
2. **Things related to current projects**
3. **List of actions**

Tip: It is always better to try to reduce inputs as much as possible. Keep only what is needed and eliminate the rest.

A Unprocessed Information

Note down your various in-trays. An in-tray does not have to be a physical one. It just has to be a place where you keep unprocessed information. For example, an email inbox contains lots of unprocessed data. Thus, it’s suitable to become an in-tray.

Try to minimise the places where you store unprocessed information as much as possible.

B How to Collect the Inputs?

Know that you will not be able to collect all of your inputs in one single place. Therefore, with inputs coming in through virtual means and from the physical world, you cannot store everything in a single system such as a list or a book or a desk.

Instead, you can have a reference list of inputs on your phone or a diary. For instance, consider a reference list that tells you which places to check when looking for unprocessed data - such as work desk, letterbox, email inbox, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.

These reference lists direct you to sources of input and help you locate the information you need.

This was all about capturing and piling up the inputs.

C Making Decisions Regarding the Pile of Inputs

The next step is to begin the work of processing everything in the pile.

You must NOT take any action at this moment. You just have to make simple decisions (plan the next steps) about every piece of unprocessed information:

- **“This input needs my attention now”**
- **“This task can be done later”**
- **“This one needs to be delegated”**
- **“This one can wait for the next 3 months,” and so on.**

Bear in mind that this applies to piles of all types - whether real or virtual.

Remember that **a decision is a workable inventory of next actions.** This means that you divide every information in the pile into 3 categories:

1. **Usable Information**
   This is kept for reference, such as names of books, authors, notes, etc.
2. **Projects**
   Any work that pops up from the pile and has multiple action steps.
3. **Actions**
   Any single thing that needs to be done, and can be done in a single step.

This process is not about finishing work. It is about deciding what you must do with your work. To sum up, you now have an idea of how you can collect all the possible inputs you get, arrange them in a pile and decide what you plan to do about each of them.

Maintaining Your System

Chapter Five

The next thing a system helps you do is to continuously curate, coordinate and revise the content. Know that the essence of this system lies in keeping things maintained.

Let's say on day 1, you dump everything on your desk, collect your inputs, and decide on the next steps for each, thereby putting everything in order.

Now, if you don't keep things coordinated and maintained, your system will fail.



HOW

- **Your inputs will pile up again**
- **You will no longer be able to make decisions about them**

?

Therefore, this system works in an all-or-nothing manner. You have to use it thoroughly or you will not be able to use it at all.

• • •

Maintaining the System

The maintenance of this system begins with the following steps:

• • •

A **Revising the projects**

This involves deciding which projects you are committed to, which ones are urgent, which ones you should place on the back burner, and so on.

This review can be daily, weekly, monthly or yearly. The key is to go over the projects regularly. It is best to review them in all 4 ways.

Every day, you can flick through each project and make quick plans regarding it.

Every week, you can set aside a couple of hours and go through your projects and commitments in a bit of detail and make decisions and plans for the coming week.

Every month, you can make future plans, track the achievements and progress you made in the previous month, and so on.

This approach is helpful as it aligns with the Ayah where Allah ﷻ says:

1 يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَلۡتَنظُرۡ نَفۡسٞ مَّا قَدَّمَتۡ لِغَدٖۖ ﷺ

O you who believe! Fear Allâh and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for tomorrow [...]

Surah Al-Hashr 18

These reviews help you track your productivity, highlight things that waste your time and most importantly, help clean out your system.

B

Cleaning out usable information

Surprisingly enough, even the usable information you gather requires a cleanup. Failing to do so leads to the information becoming unhelpful. Some of it ends up becoming junk, while other data that may still be useful becomes hard to find.

Suppose your usable information category consists primarily of cooking recipes. You need to review them regularly and ensure that you keep only the ones you want. You should also ensure they are in the right order with the deserts in one section, appetisers in the other, and everything is neatly organised.

You also need to be aware of the content in your usable information category. You never know if while going through it, you decide to try out a particular recipe and that usable information suddenly becomes a project!

Tip: Once you get your system working, avoid throwing unprocessed inputs in a category where useful data is collected neatly in a well-organised manner.

C

Dealing with open loops

Ideally, open loops that bother you should be found in the inbox with the other unprocessed data and inputs are dumped.

From time to time, however, you will realise that a few things slip out of order in the categories of processed information and require management.

For example, you may realise that a book which is supposed to be on a particular shelf has been misplaced. Such incidents open small loops that pull your attention and require you to go back and reorganise things.

You Cannot DO a Project – You Can Only Do an Action

Here is a helpful tip for people who fall prey to procrastination while working on projects.

We need to remind ourselves that we cannot do a project. We can only do the next action.

So far, we know that we can collect all the information we receive - not in a single place, but on a piece of paper that acts as a reference list, or a map of sorts.

Next, we need to decide what to do about each input/information we have gathered.

Remember: we don’t have to DO anything yet – we just have to make a decision. This is what relieves stress and helps with procrastination because we don’t have to do anything.

Defining What DONE and DOING Look Like

Sometimes, it can be difficult to tell when a project has been “done”. For example, think about a project named “Study the Deen” or “Learn About Islam”.

This one can be called a goal but not a project because the ending here cannot be specified. You simply can never say that you have studied the Deen in its entirety.

However, memorising Kitaab at-Tawheed can be a project because it has a clearly defined outcome or end.

It is therefore essential to cross out from your list of projects things whose endings are not well-defined. They can be placed in another list or folder where you gather your life goals, future plans, etc.

Apart from projects, it is important to know that some actions don’t require being put into a project. ***A simple way to determine that is to see how much time it takes:***

1. **If an action requires more than two minutes, it should be put into a project.**
2. **If it can be done in less than two minutes, it should not be included in the project.**

Controlling Our Projects and Actions

Chapter Six

Let’s discuss how to control our projects and actions.
This can be done in ***two ways***:

Horizontally **Vertically**

Horizontally

This implies looking across every project you are involved in. For example, you have a project of “memorising the Qur’an”.

When you look at it horizontally, you try to see how this project fits in with other projects, such as “Finishing the Beginner level of Student of Knowledge Program” at AMAU, for instance. The purpose behind this is to ensure that every project of yours is moving forward.

The Basic Process of Controlling Projects

Below are the basic steps that aid you in getting control of your projects:

1. **Capture everything that has your attention**
2. **Clarify what each item means and what has to be done about it**
3. **Organise the results**
4. **Reflect on what you need to do**
5. **Put things into practice**

You must note that failure is probable if we fall short in any of these steps. Quite often, people fall short in terms of consistency. However, an advantage of this system is that it helps you identify your areas of weakness.

One of the tips this book gives is to not engage in all of the above-mentioned steps at once. Instead, do each of them separately as much as you can.

A way to stay stress-free is to capture every input you get and place it into your system. Make sure you have as few sources of inputs as possible.

Another tip is to empty these sources regularly. It means that you should not leave any input unprocessed.

Ultimately, you will discover the tool that works best for you and helps you maintain your system.

Always remember that after picking up or capturing an input you never put it back into your in-tray or inbox.

The Flowchart of How Inputs are Organised

Chapter Seven

Let us now delve into a basic flowchart that helps organise an in-tray/inbox.

Imagine a big pile of inputs containing everything from to-do lists, notes scribbled down to letters, social media messages, and anything that is unorganised and hasn't been put into the system.

The first question you should ask yourself regarding each input is:

Is It Actionable?

This helps you determine whether you should do something with it or not.

If your answer is "No", you have 3 options. You need to ask yourself the following question:

Do I Need to Keep it?

A If the answer is Yes

The input could become a piece of reference material - such as a book, a recipe, etc. You will then keep it in the best-suited place available. If it is an address, it will go into an address book, and so on. It has to be useful and easy to find.

B If you DON'T need it

Throw it in the waste bin. The more stuff you put in the bin, the easier it becomes to organise your inputs.

C If it is Nothing

The input goes into a list called "Someday...Maybe." This is a list of things that you don't want to do at the moment, but you might want to do them someday. However, you must review this list regularly and check if you have done anything that is on the list.

Actionable Items

Chapter Eight

Continuing our discussion on the flowchart, we now come to talk about actionable inputs.

Regarding these, we ask the question:

Is This Input a Project or an Action?

1 **If it is a project, you further inquire:**

What is the Outcome of This Project?

Being able to define the result helps you determine if what you have on your plate is a project or a life goal (such as “seek knowledge”).

Having done this, you now ask:

What Should Be My Next Step?

This helps you determine the next action you must take to begin moving the project forward.

- **For example, suppose you have a project called “Make a YouTube Video for Channel X”**
- **The outcome of this project would be to “Upload the Video on the Channel”**
- **To get started, you need to take the next step, which can simply be “Conduct Research on the Topic of the Video”**

Another important point regarding actionable inputs you need to consider is:

Can I Do It in Less Than Two Minutes?

If you can, then know it is an action. Therefore, it’s best to get it done there and then.

Whatever you do, always remember to answer the following:

Am I the Right Person for This Task?

If you recognize that someone else is better suited than you to perform a task, delegate it to him. But remember to note it down in a list of things you are waiting for.

This **“Waiting for”** list should be checked daily to ensure that urgent tasks are taken care of.

Prepare a Next Actions List

Another list you should have is a “Next Actions” list. On average, every person is likely to have about 20-30 projects if he or she manages to include everything in the system.

Now, you need to record a single next action/step you must take to move “Project no. 1” ahead. Do this for all your remaining projects and collect those next actions in a list. In the end, you will get a number of productive tasks/actions to choose from. Whichever one you choose, the result will be that at least one of your projects will move towards completion.

Calendar

You can have a digital calendar to remind yourself of tasks and things you need to do. **Here are a couple of tips to help you organise your calendar:**

1. **Always bear in mind that some of your actions will need to be done on specific days and times**
2. **The only tasks that go into your calendar should be ones that have deadlines that cannot be shifted (i.e., tasks you need to do on specific dates and times)**
3. **Try your best to minimise your calendar**
4. **NEVER add any action/task to your calendar that needs to be done ASAP**
5. **NEVER turn your calendar into a to-do list**

Limiting the Duration of a Project

It is best to view a project as an outcome that you can achieve within a year. The point is that projects should be short-termed. They should not take too long to complete, or else they will become indistinguishable from a goal.

For example, if memorising the Qur’an is your goal, memorising Juz ‘Amma should be a project.

Keep reviewing your digital system regularly.

Choosing the Next Action

Chapter Nine

We discussed how you should gather the immediate next steps needed to move each project forward into a “Next Actions” list. Now, the question that arises is, **"How do I select one action from this list of 30 different next actions?"**

1 Split Down Your “Next Actions” List

Instead of having one big list of different tasks to do, try sorting your next actions into categories based on specific days, times, or places. Doing this will narrow down your choice of next steps and allow you to select the best thing you can do at a particular time, day, place, etc.

Consequently, you will have specific next actions to take when you are at the office, or on a train, or at home with your family, etc. Similarly, you can also have next actions for people you meet regularly, and so on.

2 See How Much Time You Have Available

Another way to choose your next actions is to think about how much time you have. For instance, if you're in the studio with only about half an hour to spare, and one of your tasks is to record a one-hour video, it's better to skip that task for now and find something else that you can finish in that short time.

A useful tip is to estimate the time needed for each task on your "next actions" list, so you can easily pick the right task based on the time you have available.

3 Keep Your Energy Levels in Mind

You are bound to feel exhausted at times. Regardless of that, the last thing you want to do is waste your time. Therefore, considering your energy levels, you can go over your “next actions” list and decide what to do accordingly.

4 Priority

Priority is a combination of ***two*** things:

- **How big is the reward of doing task X**
- **How easy is it to accomplish**

Based on priority, you can select the task you wish to strike off from your list.

Remember that whatever you do, other things will most likely crop up now and then. **To navigate such situations, here are a few points to keep in mind:**

- **Ideally, you should be doing things you already planned**
- **If a sudden task comes up, pick it up only if it's urgent and needs immediate action.**
- **Prioritise projects and actions wisely.**
- **Be regular in maintaining your system. If this maintenance takes too much time, it’s inefficient.**
- **The daily maintenance can be done early in the morning. It should include looking through your next actions, projects, and calendar for any urgent tasks. It should take about 10 minutes.**

For weekly maintenance, dedicate a few hours at the end of the weekend to delve into projects, tidy up your calendar, and organise reference files. etc. It is preferable to make it the last thing you do on the weekend.

Six Levels of Setting Goals and Reviewing Them

Chapter Ten

The book recommends 6 levels of setting and reviewing your goals.

LEVEL 1 The Ground

This level encompasses your current ongoing day-to-day actions. These should be reviewed daily.

LEVEL 2 Horizon One

This includes the projects you are currently working on. A person can have between 30 to 100 ongoing projects at any given time. All of them should be achievable within 12-18 months. Each project should be a series of action steps leading to its completion.

One must review these projects regularly (preferably weekly) to assess progress, next actions, etc. It is advisable to focus only on the next action step for a given project, rather than worrying about planning everything until the end.

LEVEL 3 Horizon Two

This level is extremely useful, especially from an Islamic perspective.

It involves areas of focus and accountability. Here, you are required to make a list of everything you are answerable for. This includes your responsibilities towards:

- **Allah ﷻ**
- **Your parents**
- **Your family**
- **Your work**
- **Your neighbour, and so on**

Unlike a list of projects and actions, this one helps you answer questions such as, “Am I fulfilling my duties towards Allah?” and so on.

It can be incredibly helpful to look through the list once a month or a week to see if you are fulfilling your responsibilities towards those who have rights over you.

It acts as a reminder list. So, if you notice yourself falling with regard to someone’s rights, you can always add it to your list of projects or next actions.

LEVEL 4 Horizon Three

This level includes things you want to achieve in 1-2 years from now. Here, you put things that cannot be called projects because they take longer to finish than an average project.

For example, let’s say you want to finish the Qur’an in 2 years. That is too long to be a project. So you place it in this level, and break it down into projects, such as memorising Juz ‘Amma, then Juz Tabaarak, and so on.

LEVEL 5 Horizon Four

This level includes things you want to achieve in 3-5 years down the line. So, you write them down, and check them regularly to track your progress.

A lot of us may set a goal of memorising the Qur'an in 5 years. But we may experience that after a great deal of time has passed, we have not made any progress. Therefore, reviewing goals and checking progress is vital at every level.

LEVEL 6 Horizon Five

The final level is all about your purpose and principles. This level should include your ultimate goals.

As Muslims, our ultimate goals are specified by Islam. For instance, a goal at this level can be "To be From the People of Jannah".

So, you begin by noting down everything you need to do to achieve this goal. Then you break it down by specifying the projects you need to complete in the next 3-5 years to get closer to your ultimate goal.

You can break things down further and make projects that you want to achieve within 1 year, such as becoming consistent in praying all 5 daily prayers at the Masjid, and so on.

Then, the most crucial thing you need to do is review your progress in each of your projects and ask yourself, "Am I on track with what I had planned to achieve?"

May Allah grant you success.

Vertical Planning

Chapter Eleven

With regard to project planning, we already discussed horizontal planning. Now we come to look at ***vertical planning***.

Vertically

The goal behind vertical planning is to get your projects under control, relieve stress, and avoid losing any useful ideas.

Extensive vertical planning is necessary only for large projects that demand daily attention.

For most projects, vertical planning is done merely to stay on top of them, keep an eye on the progress and ensure that your plans and next actions are ready.

Following these steps can help you plan your projects vertically:

1

Define the purpose of your project

“Why am I doing this?”

2

Consider the outcome

“What would it look like if it were easy?”

3

Brainstorm

“How am I going to do this?”

4

Start organising things

By highlighting things such as priorities, deadlines, etc.

5

Define the next action

“What is my next action?”

Knowing why you are doing something is important as it helps you understand what success looks like besides allowing you to prioritise the most important task on your plate.

Additional Tips:

- Breaking down a large project into smaller projects and trying to figure out a sequence in which actions must be done are helpful tips for managing projects.

- Struggling to determine your next action in a project indicates insufficient vertical planning. In such a situation, you must go back and plan your project again.

- A project can have multiple fronts, in which case you must ensure that you have the next actions ready on all fronts. Quite often, you will find that each of those next actions are independent of one another.

According to the book, 80% of your projects will most likely not require any planning, 15% may require some amount of it, and 5% might need proper planning.

Summary and Concluding Points

Chapter Twelve

Let us summarise the things you need to do to get started:

1. **Collect all your unorganised inputs in one place or a big inbox. Every year, you will set aside 2-5 days to process every single input you have.**

   Things you may need to do with each input:

   - **Throw it in the trash**
   - **Delegate it to someone**
   - **Collect it in a proper reference file among other usable bits of information**
   - **Add it to your list of projects**
   - **Add it to your list of actions, and so on.**

   You should NEVER put any input you pick up back into the inbox pile.

2. **If you come across any input that can be dealt with in a short time, say less than 2 minutes, do it right away while organising your inbox pile.**

3. **Ensure you have important lists such as a "Waiting" list and a "Next Actions" list.**

4. **Review your systems, calendar, and important lists regularly.**

5. **Keep inputs and actions for different projects separate; never mix them together.**

6. **If there is a chance that you could have potential projects in your inboxes, be sure to review them regularly.**

7. **Look for hidden projects in your "Next Actions" list, your current activities or things on your mind that you have not written down.**

8. **Keep reviewing your goals across all the "Horizons" discussed in Chapter 10. The review can be done monthly, every 3-6 months, etc.**

9. **If you find it necessary, you can split a project into multiple sub-projects.**

10. **Keep the support material of your projects organised.**

11. **There is nothing that you HAVE to do. Instead, see what works for you and stick to that.**

12. **Checklists are useful. BUT, they are not the same as to-do lists. Checklists are meant for a series of processes you need to do regularly. Having a checklist for maintaining, cleaning up and reviewing your system can be extremely useful.**

13 Review your “Next Actions” lists throughout the day, and your calendar once a day.

14 The weekly review is supposed to rid your mind of any stress and keep everything processed and organised.



To ensure your progress,
we recommend that you take
this self evaluation quiz based
on the notes and video
series that you have
just completed.

Attempt Quiz

If you find the course beneficial,
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